

TO : Regional Forester, R-5

DATE: July 17, 1953

FROM : Richard E. Mcardle, Chief

SUBJECT: F-SUPERVISION, R-5, Mendocino-Board of Review

Dear Clare:

I have been wondering if perhaps you and some of the R-5 folks would be interested in the reactions here to the Mendocino fire. From having been on the other end of these things I know that sometimes our folks in the field wonder how the front office is taking things.

Our chief feeling here, as I am sure it is with you, is one of deep and sincere sorrow for the families of the men who lost their lives. I have heard no word of blame here nor do I hold any myself for the Forest Service people in charge of control work on this fire. It seems to me that the public, at least back here, has been very understanding and very sympathetic. I have of course pressed for early board-of-review action, but I think you know the reason why I have done this. We owe it to the families of the victims to explore this matter as quickly as possible, and early action is the best way to retain public confidence and faith in us. I think our folks should understand, if they don't already understand, that the main purpose in having the board of review is to find out how this happened so we can prevent it happening again. It will not operate as judge and jury and is not a scalp-hunting expedition. I wish there were some way I could convey to our own field people my very deep appreciation for the way that they have measured up to this exceedingly difficult job and without thought of themselves have done those things that needed to be done. They have the tough end of this job, and I appreciate all that they have done and are doing a lot more than I seem to be able to put into words. It bothers me that I am not able to be there and share some of the load with them.

I have prepared a sort of "charge" to the Board of Review, which I will send on to you Monday. We will not get out any publicity here on the formation of this board and its meeting. I think you folks should handle that at your end. Probably the best way to do this would be to issue the announcement after the board has completed its meeting, but you will be in a better position than I am to know what to say and when to say it. If you think that some announcement now is desirable, you need not wait until you have a chance to discuss this with Ed Cliff, but go ahead and make a statement. Use your own good judgment.

Sincerely,

